



PROGRAM GUIDELINES

VIRGINIA MAIN STREET PROGRAM

Department of Housing and Community Development

501 North 2nd Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

804-371-7030

mainstreet@dhcd.virginia.gov

www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet

December 2006

The Virginia Main Street Program: "Building Vitality Downtown!"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
MAIN STREET COMMUNITY DESIGNATION	2
Eligibility Criteria	2
Designation Requirements	3
Newly Designated Main Street Communities	4
Mature Main Street Communities	5
Maintaining Designation	6
THE AFFILIATE OPTION	7
TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET DISTRICTS	8
CORE COMPETENCIES.....	9
Organization	10
Promotion	12
Design	13
Economic Restructuring	15
VIRGINIA MAIN STREET AT-A-GLANCE.....	17



VIRGINIA MAIN STREET PROGRAM GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Main Street Program is a preservation-based economic and community development program that follows the National Trust's Main Street Center's Main Street Approach™. Virginia Main Street offers a range of services and assistance to meet the variety of needs of communities interested in revitalization. While the program was designed to address the need for revitalization and on-going management of smaller to mid-sized downtowns, aspects of the Main Street Approach™ may be applied successfully in other commercial settings.

The focal point of the program is assistance to competitively selected communities that are working in traditional downtown settings and meet certain threshold criteria. Communities with a population of 75,000 or less with a high degree of commitment and readiness that wish to use the Main Street Approach™ in a traditional downtown setting may apply for formal Virginia Main Street designation. For communities that are just getting started in downtown revitalization, do not want full Main Street designation, or for communities that wish to use the Main Street Approach™ in compact, pedestrian-oriented commercial settings, there is an Affiliate Program. Communities of any size, counties, and cities with neighborhood commercial districts may participate in the Affiliate Program.

Virginia Main Street also serves as general clearinghouse on the latest tools and techniques in downtown development. General information, primary and secondary research and audio-visual and resource materials are available from the program to any individual or organization with a general interest in Main Street and downtown development.

For additional information, or to use our resource material, contact us at:

Virginia Main Street Program

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

501 North Second Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

804-371-7030

mainstreet@dhcd.virginia.gov

www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet

MAIN STREET COMMUNITY DESIGNATION

Virginia Main Street (VMS) provides a full-range of assistance to designated communities; from intensive services to meet the needs of newly designated communities to services that help mature programs maintain focus and effectiveness. Designated Main Street programs work to develop the critical tools for downtown revitalization such as design and economic incentives, market-driven promotions and volunteer recruitment programs. Virginia Main Street provides resources and guidance to help local programs create core competencies in revitalization.

How to Apply

Application rounds are held every three to four years as state resources permit.

Communities with an interest in seeking Main Street designation are encouraged to participate as an Affiliate community first.

Eligibility Criteria

Towns, cities or counties must meet the following requirements to be eligible to apply for full Main Street designation:

1. **Have a population of no more than 75,000 based on the 2000 Census (cities and towns only).** There is no population maximum for Counties that apply on behalf of an unincorporated area or village.
2. **Have at least 50 commercial enterprises and 70 commercial structures in the proposed Main Street district.** Experience shows that there must be a critical mass of buildings and businesses in a traditional district to form a foundation for revitalization efforts (see discussion of traditional districts on Page 8). It is also critical that there is a concentration of structures that would be eligible for frequently used rehabilitation incentives. Counties may submit an application on behalf of an unincorporated area that has at least 50 commercial enterprises and 70 commercial structures in the proposed Main Street district.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Where to House the Program - Experience has shown that a Main Street program functions most successfully as an independent nonprofit organization. Although vital partners, Chambers of Commerce or local economic development offices are not effective organizational structures for downtown development. If your community is interested in full Main Street designation, you will need an independent nonprofit organization. If a Special Assessment District is in place for the proposed Main Street district, and the Executive Director would have department head status, Virginia Main Street may consider a proposal to house the program as a department of local government, but this option is not preferred.

Your Financial Commitment - Virginia Main Street uses an initial minimum funding period of five years in order to provide an organization with a stable financial foundation while capacity and a track record of success is developed. Most communities realize a strong return on their financial investment and achieve more visible physical and economic changes after the organization has been active for three to five years. Public and private financial commitment to revitalization should be ongoing and it is expected that local government financial support will extend long after the initial five year period as long as the organization continues to provide a valuable benefit to the community. We rank higher applications that show proof of a strong on-going financial commitment. An adequate budget is required to maintain Main Street designation and to receive on-going services.

Clerical Support - Executive directors need clerical support to be effective. Communities should consider providing the equivalent of 20-hour minimum per week of clerical support through paid staff or volunteers. (Small communities - 15 hours).

Designation Requirements

Communities selected to join Virginia Main Street must meet the following designation criteria and continue to meet them to maintain their designation and receive VMS services.

DESIGNATED MAIN STREET COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS	
Work in a traditional Main Street district	Main Street districts must be a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Approach™, including a pedestrian scale and orientation; critical mass of buildings and businesses; and critical mass of structures that would be eligible for frequently used rehabilitation incentives. See Page 8 for the specific criteria for a traditional Main Street district.
Use the Main Street Approach™	Main Street provides the only comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional downtown commercial districts. It is proven to work and following the approach is a requirement of initial and on-going designation. Economic development in the context of historic preservation is central to the approach as are four active, standing committees: Design, Organization, Economic Restructuring and Promotion.
Have a downtown organization	The downtown constituency is unique and has not been adequately served by traditional economic and business development groups. A separate, independent organization with a mission to act as the advocate for downtown is the best way to reverse decline and foster progress. The downtown organization should include a wide variety of stakeholders and have strong support from both public and private sectors.
Have sustainable program funding	Financial stability of the Main Street organization is crucial to staying focussed on the program's mission. Besides covering salaries, downtown organizations must provide an adequate operating budget to cover an active program of work, clerical assistance, and travel and training for both board members and staff. Budgets will vary by community and samples are available from VMS.
Employ an executive director	Paid professional staff to manage the downtown and the revitalization work is critical. Communities with populations under 5,000 can have success with a part-time executive director (a minimum of 25 hours per week). Other communities must have full-time management to be effective (minimum 40 hours per week). Salaries should be commensurate with public-oriented professionals in the area.
Have organizational systems and structures	Administrative systems and tools help effectively manage program activities throughout the organization while benchmarking progress. Each year a comprehensive work plan and budget should outline activities of the four committees as well as those of signature programs or events.
Sign a Letter of Agreement (LOA)	Local commitment and support is critical to Main Street success. In designated communities, local government, the downtown organization and DHCD sign a letter of agreement that clearly specifies the responsibilities of each. Newly designated communities sign a letter of agreement each year until they reach the mature stage. Mature communities sign a letter of agreement every three years.
Maintain standards of excellence	Each designated community must be accredited as a National Main Street Community at least once every three years in order to demonstrate the performance standards of the organization; national recognition is an additional benefit. Building skills through regular attendance at VMS trainings is also required.
Submit information to VMS	All designated Main Street communities must submit the following each year: 1) twelve monthly reports (submitted quarterly); 2) salary survey; 3) program directory information; and 4) an annual report that includes: a) a vision and mission statement, b) the actual budget, including revenues and expenses, c) a list of the board of directors, d) dates and topics of training for board, volunteers and staff (including attendance record for VMS training), e) key accomplishments and achievements, and f) the current comprehensive Main Street work plan.

Newly Designated Main Street Communities

Virginia Main Street provides the most intensive service in the first years of program designation. Special services that are generally provided in the first year focus on helping the community assess issues facing downtown, map out a general strategy for revitalization and train the community in the tools and techniques needed to succeed. The services listed below will be provided to communities using a performance-based approach that will require discussions between the community and VMS to set appropriate targets and outcomes.

NEWLY DESIGNATED MAIN STREET COMMUNITY SERVICES	
Special Services	
Reconnaissance Visit	State and outside specialists perform a preliminary needs assessment of the physical and economic environment of the community and downtown. (On-site)
Organizational Visit	State staff assists with organizational issues including roles and responsibilities of staff and Board. Work planning assistance is also provided. (On-site)
Specialist Visits	Specialists in the fields of market analysis, branding, and/or other fields identified during the Reconnaissance Visit work in conjunction with the local community to address specific needs. (On-site)
Core Competencies Checklist	Identifies program benchmarks and serves as the basis for committee work plans (see Page 9).
Specialist Services and Technical Assistance	
Design Assistance	Comprehensive assistance from an architect with expertise in older, historic commercial architecture, including façade designs, consultations and training.
Specialist Visits	One-day visits by State staff and downtown development specialists to help communities address specific issues.
Organizational Assessments	State staff and specialists come on-site to assess organization progress.
Program Support and Professional Development	
National Main Street Center Network Membership	Benefits include subscriptions to technical publications, newsletters and a hot line.
Program Manager Training	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. Managers must attend.
Regional Board Training	As needed training by State staff and experienced Board members.
Main Street Essentials	State staff and specialists train local programs in the Main Street Approach™.
Topical Training	State staff and specialists train local programs in specific revitalization topics. Program managers, board and committee members are encouraged to attend.
Scholarships	Scholarships to the NMSC's annual conference are provided.
Work Planning Assistance	State staff is available to facilitate local strategic and work planning.
Remote Consultation	State and National Main Street Center staff are available by phone and e-mail.
Resource & Information Sharing	State staff and specialists prepare quarterly newsletters and timely e-mail updates of opportunities for services and funding available. Networking with other communities is encouraged using VMS maintained contact lists.
Virginia Main Street Library	More than 175 titles are available for loan. Extensive files are also available.
Marketing	
Road signage	Road signs to denote Main Street designation are provided.
Public Relations	Regular press coverage and exposure is provided through media releases and marketing materials, including the Driving Tour Brochure and Annual Report.
Use of Main Street Logo	Electronic artwork is provided.

Mature Main Street Communities

Restored façades, lower vacancy rates and new streetscapes are not signs that revitalization is finished. It means that Main Street programs are entering the management or mature phase. Designated communities continuing to meet the requirements on page three are considered mature programs after the initial designation services have been received from VMS. Virginia Main Street provides on-going services to assist mature communities in maintaining long-term effectiveness and progress. The services listed below will be provided to communities using a performance-based approach that will require discussions between the community and VMS to set appropriate targets and outcomes.

MATURE MAIN STREET COMMUNITY SERVICES	
Specialist Services and Technical Assistance	
Design Assistance	Limited number of façade drawings, updates to existing drawings and sign design, as resources allow. Phone and e-mail assistance as needed.
Specialist Visits	Virginia Main Street Staff available on request. Specialists, as resources allow.
Organizational Assessments	As needed.
Research	Staff will conduct research on issues or topics of interest using state and national contacts.
Program Support and Professional Development	
Program Manager Training	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. Managers must attend.
Regional Board Training	As needed training by State staff and experienced Board members.
Main Street Essentials	State staff and specialists train local programs in the Main Street Approach™.
Topical Training	State staff and specialists train local programs in specific revitalization topics. Program managers, board and committee members are encouraged to attend.
Scholarships	Scholarships to the Virginia Downtown Development Association conference and/or National Main Street Center's conference are provided through a competitive process on a limited basis, as funds allow.
Work Planning Assistance	State staff is available to facilitate local strategic and work planning.
Remote Consultation	State and National Main Street Center staff members are available by phone and e-mail.
Resource & Information Sharing	State staff and specialists prepare quarterly newsletters and timely e-mail updates of opportunities for services and funding available to Virginia's downtowns. Networking with other communities is encouraged using VMS maintained contact lists.
Virginia Main Street Library	More than 175 titles are available for loan. Extensive files are also available.
Marketing	
Public Relations	Regular press coverage and exposure is provided through media releases and marketing materials, including the Driving Tour and Annual Report.
Use of Main Street Logo	Electronic artwork is provided.

Maintaining Designation

Virginia Main Street is committed to maintaining long-term relationships with designated communities and will assist organizations in continuing to meet the requirements listed on page three as a means of remaining an active, effective downtown revitalization program and receiving VMS services. Organizations that decide that they can not or do not want to continue to meet the designation requirements may become an Affiliate at any time and receive the services outlined on page seven.

However, if a community with an interest in maintaining designation is having difficulty meeting the designation requirements in one or more areas, the organization should contact VMS as soon as possible to discuss the situation, arrange assistance and develop a schedule to address the issues in a timely manner. VMS will also review the administrative information that programs submit annually (see box on this page) and will work with localities, as needed, to strengthen areas that may impact the program's effectiveness and its ability to meet designation requirements. In such cases, VMS will offer targeted assistance to the program, including helping the program develop a detailed work plan to address areas of concern in a timely fashion. Dedicated and well-planned efforts by the local program to meet designation requirements are vital to continued economic health in downtown and a strong partnership with VMS. Since services from VMS are provided using a performance-based approach, additional special services such as consultant visits and design services will be postponed while the organization focuses their energies on meeting designation requirements and strengthening their organization.

As soon as the organization again meets the designation requirements, full services will be restored to the community immediately. In the event that an organization is unable to meet designation requirements within a year of initial discussions with VMS about the issue, the community will be invited to participate as an Affiliate at that time. As a DHCD Commercial District Affiliate, the community will have access to VMS trainings, networking opportunities, consultation with state staff on downtown revitalization issues and access to the VMS library and files. As an Affiliate, the community will no longer be included in VMS marketing materials and will need to remove Virginia Main Street road signs and return them to VMS.

Formerly designated communities may re-apply to become fully designated again once they have been active in downtown revitalization (as an Affiliate or by providing a letter detailing that activity) for three or more years. They must apply during a regular VMS designation round, complete the current application and will be competitively evaluated along with all other applicants.

Information Reviewed by VMS

As noted in the designation requirements on page three, a variety of information must be submitted to VMS each year. This serves the dual purpose of determining eligibility for accreditation as a National Main Street Community and providing an opportunity for targeted assistance from VMS as needed. Communities must submit:

- ✓ Monthly reports
- ✓ Salary survey
- ✓ Program directory information
- ✓ An annual report that includes:
 - Vision and mission statement,
 - The actual budget, including revenues and expenses,
 - The board of directors,
 - Dates and topics of training for board, volunteers and staff (including attendance record for VMS training),
 - Key accomplishments and achievements, and
 - The current Comprehensive Main Street work plan

If these items are not submitted, or indicate that the organization may not be meeting designation requirements, VMS will immediately begin working with the community on a plan to maintain

THE AFFILIATE OPTION

The Affiliate option provides a range of services and assistance to meet a variety of community commitment and readiness levels. It is for communities that are exploring downtown revitalization, that are preparing for designation or those that may not be eligible for designation.

A core feature of the service to Affiliates is access to training by state and national downtown development experts. Affiliates have the opportunity to learn about best practices in the field and to network with peers from around the state.

It should be noted that communities that complete the application will be referred to as DHCD Commercial District Affiliates and the term “Affiliate” describes the *relationship* between a community and DHCD’s Virginia Main Street program. It is only intended for use in public relations or educational communication, but not for marketing materials, public displays, signs or similar promotional tools, as this use could misleadingly convey that the community has achieved full VMS designation – a hard won benefit of competitively selected communities.

How to Apply

Communities may become an Affiliate at anytime with successful completion of a two-page application.

AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES

Services

Main Street Essentials	State staff and specialists train local programs in the Main Street Approach™.
Topical Training	State staff and specialists train local programs in specific revitalization topics.
Scholarships	Scholarships to the Virginia Downtown Development Association conference and/or National Main Street Center’s conference are provided through a competitive process on a limited basis, as funds allow.
Remote Consultation	State staff is available by phone and e-mail.
Resource & Information Sharing	State staff and specialists prepare quarterly newsletters and timely e-mail updates of opportunities for services and funding available to Virginia’s downtowns. Networking with other communities is encouraged using VMS maintained contact lists.
Virginia Main Street Library	More than 175 titles are available for loan. Extensive files are also available.

Requirements

Work in a pedestrian-oriented commercial district	While Affiliates are not required to have a traditional Main Street district (see Page 8), they should have a pedestrian-oriented commercial area with a high percentage of locally-owned businesses. A county may become an Affiliate on behalf of one or more communities within the county. A city may become an affiliate on behalf of one or more neighborhood commercial districts within a city.
Have a broad-based revitalization organization	This organization does not have to be an independent nonprofit and may include Chambers of Commerce, departments of local government or other structures.
Use the comprehensive Main Street Approach™	This is the foundation of all Virginia Main Street assistance.
Active Participation	Affiliate communities must keep their contact information current and utilize VMS services at least once each year to remain active. Affiliates that remain inactive for a period of more than one year will be notified and dropped from the Affiliate roster. Communities dropped from the affiliate roster may re-apply by completing the Affiliate application again.

TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET DISTRICTS

The Virginia Main Street Program is a preservation-based economic and community development program that follows the National Trust's Main Street Center's Main Street Approach™. The program was designed to address the need for revitalization and on-going management of smaller to mid-sized downtowns and uses the traditional assets of downtowns as a catalyst for revitalization. Nationwide and in Virginia, successful Main Street districts share certain common characteristics:

- ✓ A pedestrian scale and orientation;
- ✓ A critical mass of buildings and businesses which form the foundation for revitalization efforts;
- ✓ A critical mass of structures that would be eligible for frequently used rehabilitation incentives (state and federal tax credits and local tax abatement).

In order to assure a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Approach™ to commercial revitalization, designated Main Street districts must have:

- ❑ At least **50 commercial enterprises** and **70 structures or storefronts**;
- ❑ At least **2/3rds of the structures are commercial** (or commercially zoned) buildings and have a pedestrian scale and orientation including such elements as ground floor storefronts;
- ❑ At least **25 percent** of the linear street frontage has a **setback of 15' or less** from the sidewalk;
- ❑ A **compact size** and regular pattern of sidewalks so that it can be comfortably walked by pedestrians.

Communities interested in Main Street designation may request that Virginia Main Street review a potential district for its appropriateness. Existing Main Street programs seeking to enlarge the boundaries of their current districts must also meet these guidelines for the expanded district. Affiliates are not required to have a traditional district, but must have a pedestrian-oriented commercial district and submit the appropriate maps along with their application. For Affiliate communities that plan to pursue designation in the future, it is suggested that the traditional district criteria be used in order to prevent the need for a change to the boundaries when application for designation is made.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **community** must propose specific boundaries for the commercial district revitalization effort and provide evidence that the district meets these criteria. Virginia Main Street can provide assistance with methods for compiling this information including building and business inventories, as well as guidance on how to measure setback.

Virginia Main Street will review the district criteria and make an on-site visual assessment of the commercial district at the request of the community to determine the appropriateness of the proposed new or expanded district.

CORE COMPETENCIES

To assist designated Main Street communities in the incremental and comprehensive development of an active downtown revitalization program, Virginia Main Street has developed the following list of core competencies. While individual projects and activities are unique to the community, there are some general tasks and types of projects Virginia Main Street has found to be vital to the progressive growth of a Main Street program and organization. These competencies are meant to be a base level of activity, and communities should strive to undertake more challenging projects as they build capacity.

Steady progress in meeting core competencies must occur during the first three to five years of the organization's Main Street Designation in order for specialist services to continue. Progress in meeting the core competencies will be evaluated during Organizational Assessments.

The core competencies are listed below and categorized according to the Main Street Approach™. In order to build a strong foundation for the program, a very active Organization Committee is required to work on the numerous projects listed under this category. Although there are many important organizational tasks, it is necessary to remember that the Main Street Approach™ is comprehensive and activities in the areas of Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring, as well as Organization, are essential for an action-oriented program that achieves successful, on-going revitalization of the central business district.

Core competencies build upon each other and are often related to competencies in other categories. It is recommended that they be completed in the general sequence in which they are listed.

ORGANIZATION

This element of the Main Street Approach™ focuses on building collaboration among a broad range of public and private sector groups, organizations and constituencies.

The Organization Committee plays a key role in keeping the board, committees and staff functioning by attracting people and money to the Main Street Program. To succeed, this committee must take responsibility for managing these financial and logistical aspects of the non-profit organization:

- ✓ Raising money - for projects and administration, from donations, sponsorships, etc.;
- ✓ Overseeing volunteer activities- by recruiting and supervising people, and rewarding good work;
- ✓ Promoting the program - to downtown interests and the public;
- ✓ Managing finances - by developing good accounting procedures.

ORGANIZATION CORE COMPETENCIES

The below activities are grouped by *basic*, *intermediate* and *advanced*. In general, projects grouped in the basic category should be completed before the organization moves on to intermediate activities. Intermediate activities should be completed before tackling advanced projects. This progression will serve to build a strong foundation upon which the organization can build a long-term, successful program.

Basic

- ❑ Develop an organizational structure, Articles of Incorporation and By-laws
- ❑ Develop an annual budget
 - Achieve Board approval
 - Send to VMS
- ❑ Formulate accounting systems (It is also suggested that all programs have an annual audit by a CPA)
- ❑ Bookkeeping system
- ❑ Payroll/employee number
- ❑ Registrations: state, county, city
- ❑ Bank/charge accounts
- ❑ Hire a Program Manager
- ❑ Set up Main Street office including:
 - Permanent Location
 - Equipment
 - Furnishings
- ❑ Develop a clear, shared mission and write it as a mission statement
- ❑ Hold annual work planning sessions
- ❑ Develop a written work plan
 - Achieve Board approval
 - Send to VMS
- ❑ Form committees and hold regular meetings
- ❑ Decide on tax-exempt status and make application to IRS

Intermediate

- ❑ Develop an organization logo (letterhead, etc.)
- ❑ Initiate an annual, signed agreement with local government
- ❑ Create and regularly update job descriptions for both staff and volunteers
- ❑ Compile and send Board of Directors list and contact information to VMS
- ❑ Develop a fundraising goal and strategy
- ❑ Create a process and conduct regular Program Manager performance evaluations

Advanced

- ❑ Develop a long-term fund development plan including:
 - Sustainable and diverse income base
 - List of private contributors
 - At least one fundraising event
 - Produce an informational brochure about the organization
 - Develop various methods for communicating with donors throughout the year
- ❑ Create a mailing list for the organization including:
 - Downtown business owners
 - Downtown property owners
 - Local interest groups
 - Officials
 - Supporters
- ❑ Develop a regular mechanism for communication (e-mail blast, annual report, newsletter, newspaper column, etc.)
- ❑ Build a volunteer database

PROMOTION

This element of the Main Street Approach™ deals with marketing the district's assets to residents, visitors, investors and others through special events, retail promotion and activities that improve the way the district is perceived.

The Promotion Committee has the job of promoting downtown as the center of commerce, culture and community life for residents and visitors alike. To be effective this committee must move beyond cookie-cutter downtown promotion ideas. Specifically:

- ✓ Understanding the changing market - identifying both potential shoppers and the competition;
- ✓ Identifying downtown assets - including people, buildings, heritage and institutions;
- ✓ Defining Main Street's market niche - its unique position in the marketplace;
- ✓ Creating new image campaigns, retail promotions and special events - these activities should be market driven and designed to bring people back to downtown.

PROMOTION CORE COMPETENCIES

- ❑ Develop, approve and publish a balanced annual calendar of promotional events that includes a mix of special events, retail and image events.
- ❑ Evaluate promotional events - including information on number of attendees and impact in reaching program goals
- ❑ Develop a media resource list
- ❑ Conduct outreach / media relations activities including:
 - Press releases
 - Print media columns
 - Press liaison
 - Feature articles
 - Radio/TV talk shows
- ❑ Create a downtown business directory
- ❑ Initiate and complete at least one special event
- ❑ Initiate and complete at least one retail event
- ❑ Conduct downtown image development activities including:
 - Identify downtown's assets
 - Compile information about the marketplace
 - Analyze data
 - Match assets with market niches
 - Write a positioning statement
 - Conduct Image advertising (Examples: newspaper, radio, TV, direct mail ads)
 - Develop collateral materials (Examples: entrance signs, banner, shopping bags, buttons, T-shirts w/ logo)
 - Develop media relations (Examples: media kits, press releases, press receptions for major projects, TV, radio and newspaper interviews)
 - Develop image-building events (Examples: downtown progress awards ceremonies, ribbon-cutting for new projects, "before and after" renovation displays)

DESIGN

This element of the Main Street Approach™ involves improving the physical environment by renovating buildings, constructing compatible new buildings, improving signs and merchandise displays, creating attractive and usable public spaces and ensuring that planning and zoning regulations support Main Street revitalization.

The Design Committee plays a key role in shaping the physical image of Main Street as a place attractive to shoppers, investors, business owners and visitors. To succeed this committee must persuade business owners, building owners and civic leaders to adopt a specific approach for physical improvements to buildings, businesses and public improvements. Specifically:

- ✓ Educating others about good design - enhancing the image of each business as well as that of the district;
- ✓ Providing good design advice - encouraging quality improvements to private properties and public spaces;
- ✓ Planning Main Street's development - guiding future growth and shaping regulations;
- ✓ Motivating others to make changes - creating incentives and targeting key projects.

DESIGN CORE COMPETENCIES

The below activities are grouped by *basic*, *intermediate* and *advanced*. In general, projects grouped in the basic category should be completed before the organization moves on to intermediate activities. Intermediate activities should be completed before tackling advanced projects. This progression will serve to build a strong foundation upon which the organization can build a long-term, successful program.

Basic

- ❑ Develop and market improvement incentives and assistance including:
 - Work with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to list the downtown district on the National Register of Historic Places and/or the Virginia Landmarks Register
 - Design guidelines – develop a design guidelines publication, use Keeping up Appearances in the interim
 - Design Assistance – through Virginia Main Street Architect
- ❑ Evaluate existing physical assets – buildings, streets, public signs, parking lots and open spaces
- ❑ Inventory condition of physical environment
- ❑ Complete and maintain building inventory (in partnership with the Economic Restructuring Committee, see page 15)
- ❑ Identify opportunities for façade improvements

Intermediate

- ❑ Develop and market improvement incentives and assistance including:
- ❑ Real estate tax abatement
 - Loan programs
 - Grant programs
 - Design Assistance – through Virginia Main Street Architect
- ❑ Explore a formalized design review process with custom design guidelines
- ❑ Develop district identification signs

- ❑ Create a detailed and visually appealing map of downtown
- ❑ Photograph downtown extensively; including before, during and after photos of rehabilitation work and promotional events; use professional photographers when possible
- ❑ Streetscape improvements
- ❑ Mid-size rehabilitation projects

Advanced

- ❑ Conduct a traffic study
- ❑ Conduct a parking study (if appropriate)
- ❑ Continue façade improvements
- ❑ Large rehabilitation projects
- ❑ Develop design guidelines for infill development
- ❑ Design and implement a wayfinding system

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

This element of the Main Street Approach™ concentrates on strengthening and growing the district's economic base by developing effective strategies for business retention and recruitment.

The Economic Restructuring Committee has the job of identifying new market opportunities for the traditional commercial district, finding new uses for historic commercial buildings and stimulating investment in property. To succeed, this committee must develop a thorough understanding of the community's economic condition and opportunities for incremental market growth. Specifically:

- ✓ Strengthening existing businesses and recruiting new ones;
- ✓ Finding new economic uses for traditional Main Street buildings;
- ✓ Developing financial incentives and capital for building rehabilitations and business development;
- ✓ Monitoring the economic performance of the district.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING CORE COMPETENCIES

- ❑ Complete and maintain a building inventory (in partnership with the Design Committee) including:
 - Rental rates
 - Square footage
 - Age of building / historic status
 - Zoning class
 - Unique features
 - Condition
 - Ownership / management
 - Vacancy
 - Availability (date / price)
 - Assessed value / taxes
 - Current photograph
- ❑ Complete and maintain a business inventory including:
 - Cumulative number of businesses
 - Ownership / management
 - Product / Service
 - Customers
 - Date established
 - Business hours
 - Sales patterns
 - Lease conditions
 - Availability (date / price)
- ❑ Define and refine a market position through targeted market research including:
 - Surveys (business owner and consumer)
 - Demographic and psychographic analysis
 - Business mix / clustering analysis
 - Trade area analysis
 - Sales leakage / sales potential assessment
- ❑ Develop business retention programs
- ❑ Develop an entrepreneurial support system

- ❑ Track program impact, including:
 - Changes in sales tax revenue
 - Changes in property tax revenue
 - Changes in assessed value of property
 - Net new jobs
 - Net new businesses
 - Amount of private investment
 - Number of volunteer hours
- ❑ Develop and market economic development incentives, including
 - Business seminars
 - Loan pool programs
 - Grant programs
 - Angel investment programs
- ❑ Develop a business attraction program including marketing materials
- ❑ Create a new business owners' orientation kit

Virginia Main Street At-A-Glance

	New Main Street	Mature Main Street	Affiliate
Requirements			
Use Main Street Approach	X	X	X
Independent Downtown Organization	X	X	Any organization
Traditional Main Street District	X	X	
Sustainable Program Funding	X	X	
Employ Executive Director	X	X	
Provide Clerical Support	X	X	
Training and Progress Reporting	X	X	
Sign Letter of Agreement	Every year until mature stage	Once every three years	
National Main Street Community	Once every three years	Once every three years	
Services			
Reconnaissance Visit	X		
Organizational Visit	X		
Specialist Visits	X		
National Main Street Center Membership	X		
Design Assistance	X	Limited	
Specialist Visits	X	If resources available	
Organizational Assessments	X	As Needed	
Core Competencies Checklist	X	X	
Program Manager Meetings	X	X	
Highway Signage	X	X	
Public Relations	X	X	
Use of Main Street Name and/or Logo	X	X	
Work planning assistance	X	X	If resources available
Scholarships	X	Limited number Competitive process	If resources available
Main Street Essentials Training	X	X	X
Topical Training	X	X	X
Regional Board Training	X	X	
Remote Consultations	X	X	X
Resource & Information Sharing	X	X	X
Main Street Library	X	X	X